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ABSTRACT

To comply with the district desegregation plan, the San Francisco Unified School District previously required higher scores for Chinese American students applying to the academic magnet, Lowell High School, than for more under-represented groups. Several Chinese parents sued the district, challenging the legality of the desegregation plan, which led to the recent end of race-based assignments. This paper examines the admissions debate at Lowell High and suggests that the exclusion of Asian and Latino concerns in the district's policymaking process led to the lawsuit. It examines Lowell enrollment figures and discusses misconceptions about high-achieving African American and Latino students. Though race-based admission ended, the debate still continues. For example, African American and Latino students in the highest possible point bracket matriculate to Lowell at well below the average rate, possibly because the admissions policy may have created a hostile environment that led people to assume that all minority students were admitted under preferential criteria. The American public education system has not yet found an effective way to address the needs of low-income and low-achieving students. (Contains 23 references.) (SM)

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DESEGREGATION AT LOWELL HIGH SCHOOL

ED 453 302

Desegregation Politics in a Competitive Admissions Setting:

The Case of Lowell High School

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ABSTRACT:

In order to comply with the district desegregation plan, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) previously required higher scores for Chinese American students applying to the academic magnet, Lowell High School, than for more under-represented groups. Several Chinese parents sued the district, challenging the legality of the desegregation plan, which led to the recent end of race-based assignments. This paper examines the admissions debate at Lowell, and suggests that the exclusion of Asian and Latino concerns in the district's policy making process led to the lawsuit. Furthermore, this paper provides a detailed examination of Lowell enrollment figures and discusses misconceptions about high-achieving African American and Latino students.

Public education in the United States has served an increasingly diverse student population, adding new twists to the debates regarding desegregation and equalized educational opportunity. Lowell High School in San Francisco presents a fascinating case study of the issues of desegregation in a diverse and competitive admissions environment. Lowell has garnered national attention in recent years because of a lawsuit brought over the admissions policy. As part of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), Lowell must comply with the district's Consent Decree, the desegregation plan adopted in 1983. Lowell is the district's academic magnet school, and employs a competitive admissions process. In order to follow the integration guidelines outlined in the Consent Decree, the district previously imposed a system of differential cut-offs for Lowell applicants based upon race, with the highest and most difficult composite score required of Chinese American applicants and the lowest composite score required of African American and Latino applicants. In 1994, a group of Chinese American parents sued the school district in Ho v. SFUSD (1994), claiming that the Consent Decree unfairly burdened Chinese American students. The resolution of this lawsuit recently led to an agreement to end race-based assignments within the school district (Asimov, 1999).

This paper is a case study of the admissions debate at Lowell High School. The history of the San Francisco Unified School District and the manner in which the district addressed admissions at Lowell has policy implications for integration efforts and competitive admissions decisions. The author argues that the exclusion of Asian and Latino concerns in the policy making process of the SFUSD led to the Ho v. SFUSD lawsuit, thereby illustrating the need for inclusive decision making. This case study will

also provide a detailed examination of enrollment at Lowell and will reveal misconceptions that exist within the admissions debate.

SFUSD History

Like many urban districts, desegregation efforts in San Francisco were drawn out over many years and were often marked by inconsistent implementation. Following a decade of resistance and legal skirmishes with the NAACP, in 1971 the SFUSD moved to implement the "Horseshoe" desegregation plan for the 1971-72 academic year. The Horseshoe Plan divided San Francisco into seven zones and used the California state guideline's 15% mark for racial balance. The 15% rule stated that within a school, the percentage of any one ethnic group should not deviate more than 15% from the group's representation in the district overall. The plan did not prove as effective as anticipated, however, because of several factors. Over the summer of 1971, enrollment in elementary schools declined by 16%, largely due to "white flight" as parents withdrew their children from the public school system (Fine, 1986). Furthermore, 76% of the population of Chinese students also demonstrated their unwillingness to be part of the plan by leaving the public schools to enroll in private "Freedom Schools" (Fine, 1986). Consequently, in an effort to attract Chinese Americans back to the school district, most of them were granted Optional Enrollment Requests (OER's) which exempted them from the desegregation plan. Therefore, at the onset of the Horseshoe Plan, one third of the schools were already unbalanced. By 1976-77, this figure had increased to almost one half (Kirp, 1982).

During the 1978-79 academic year, the Horseshoe Plan was replaced with the Educational Redesign, a predecessor of the current Consent Decree. Under this new plan, the zone concept of desegregation was abandoned for a percentage-based formula. The new rules stated that within a school, the student population could not be composed of over 45% of a single ethnic group, and a minimum of four out of the district's nine ethnic categories were to be represented.

The increasing presence of non-African American minorities further complicated matters. According to the district's web site, over time the percentage of white and African American students has dramatically decreased in the district, while the presence of Chinese Americans and Latinos has climbed. Table 1 illustrates enrollment data from the first year of the Horseshoe Plan, the year the Consent Decree was implemented, and the most current available data.

[Insert Table 1 here]

In 1978, the NAACP filed another suit against the San Francisco school district on behalf of three African American students from the Bayview-Hunter's Point area of the city. Although most schools had achieved some level of integration, the schools in Bayview-Hunter's Point remained highly segregated and maintained a reputation for low achievement and violence. The NAACP alleged that the equal protection rights of the children of that area were being violated by confining them to schools with poorer resources and teachers than other neighborhood schools (Fraga, Lee, and Anhalt 1998).

In December of 1982, the parties agreed to settle the suit by accepting a Consent Decree, which was officially approved in May 1983. The Consent Decree stipulated two primary goals. The first was "...to eliminate racial/ethnic segregation or identifiability in

any SFUSD school, program, or classroom and to achieve the broadest practical distribution throughout the system of students from the racial and ethnic groups which comprise the student enrollment of the SFUSD" (Consent Decree, 1983). The second stated that "the overall goal of this Consent Decree will require continued and accelerated efforts to achieve academic excellence throughout the SFUSD" (Consent Decree, 1983).

The Consent Decree was modeled in part after the Educational Redesign plan. The city's student population was classified into nine different ethnic groups: Other White, African American, Spanish Surname, Chinese, American Indian, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Other Non-White (Consent Decree, 1983). The Decree stipulated that within a given school, a minimum of four of these nine groups must be represented, and no one group can comprise more than 45% within a regular school or 40% within an alternative school such as Lowell (Consent Decree, 1983).

In spite of the changing demographics and the increasing presence of Asian and Latino students, the district failed to go beyond the black-white paradigm of the desegregation issue. In his 1962 report, "The Proper Recognition of a Pupil's Background," Superintendent Spears blamed segregation on everything from "indifferent parents" to "unresponsive students." While he was addressing the issue of black and white segregation, he did not acknowledge the segregation of other minority groups or the fact that the city had a history of keeping Chinese American students out of public schools and confining them to the "Oriental School" (Low, 1982). In fact, it was not until 1947, just 15 years before his report, that the state of California repealed laws that segregated Mexican American and Chinese Americans into separate schools from white children.

Even after the district began to desegregate the schools, Latino and Asian Americans were not included in the process. Chinese Americans refused to participate in the Horseshoe Plan, withdrew their children from the district and sent them to "Freedom Schools." As a more recent example of exclusion, in 1993 advocates for Chinese and Latino students, namely attorneys for the Chinese American Democratic Club and for Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy (META), Inc., attempted to become parties to the Court's further consideration of the Consent Decree. They argued that representatives of the district's two largest groups should be allowed positions on the overseeing committee. At the time, Latino students represented 20.1% and Chinese American students represented 25% of the school district. African Americans comprised 18% of the district's population. The judge denied their request, allowing the NAACP to be the sole representative of the district's students. The reasoning behind his decision was that limiting the number of involved parties would increase the chances of coming to an agreement by consensus (Lee, 1996).

On July 11, 1994, Chinese American parents filed Ho v. San Francisco Unified School District with the Northern District of California Court (1994). The suit questioned the legality of the entire Consent Decree. According to Daniel Girard, the plaintiffs' attorney, the parents involved in the suit challenged the Consent Decree because their children had been capped out of schools, including Lowell, solely because of their ethnicity (1997). Given their history with the SFUSD, the Chinese American community felt that they had no other recourse but to bring suit in order to make the school district acknowledge their concerns (D. Girard, personal communication, March 18, 1997).

Not surprisingly, the desegregation history of the San Francisco Unified School District has had a profound effect on current circumstances. With regards to Lowell, the way the district has dealt with - or avoided dealing with - minority groups has influenced the racial politics of desegregation. We now turn to a more careful examination of the admissions policy at Lowell High School.

Lowell High School

Founded in 1856, Lowell High School is the oldest public high school west of the Mississippi. Lowell maintains a prestigious reputation as arguably the best public high school in the city and is the only public school with academically competitive admissions.

> An invitation to attend Lowell is something like gold to many young San Franciscans and their families. Students often set their sights on Lowell from an early age, hoping to one day join an elite corps of alumni that includes ambassadors, authors, Rhodes scholars, scientists and countless luminaries, from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer to actress Carol Channing. (Asimov, 1995).

Of the graduating class of 1999, 97% went on to attend college. Ample evidence exists to support Lowell's reputation as a high school that prepares the city's students well for college level work.

Because Lowell is widely renowned, competition for admission is keen. Selection is based on state level standardized test scores as well as middle school grade point average. A system is employed where a total of 69 points are possible. Students

are admitted starting with those who have the highest possible score, 69, and then those lower on the scale until all the slots for the incoming class are filled. For example, all students with 69 points are admitted, and then all those with 68 points, and so forth, until no more students can be taken.

In the 1990's, however, the admissions process was complicated by the fact that applicants were also evaluated on the basis of their ethnicity due to efforts to comply with the Consent Decree. In particular, the Consent Decree specified that no one ethnicity could exceed 40% of the student population within an alternative school such as Lowell. Over the past 20 years, however, Chinese Americans, other Asian groups, and Latinos have been increasing in numbers while African American and Caucasian students have been leaving the school district. Currently, Chinese American students make up the plurality in the district at approximately 29% while African American comprise 16% and Latino students comprise 22% of the district. White students represent only 13% of the district's population (SFUSD, 2000).

These factors have come into play in Lowell admissions. Middle and upper-class Chinese American students tend to do well on the CTBS and in middle school coursework. Furthermore, these Chinese Americans apply at a higher rate to Lowell than any other ethnicity. For example, for the class of 1996-97, Lowell received 667 Chinese applicants, compared to the 385 Other White, 239 Other Non-White, 234 Latino, 175 Filipino and 102 African American applicants (SFUSD, 1996). As a result of higher application rates, Chinese student achievement with regards to the admissions criteria, and the large number of Chinese students within the district, the Chinese American student population at Lowell threatened to violate the 40% cap imposed by the Consent

Decree. In an effort to prevent noncompliance with the Consent Decree as well as to promote under-represented minorities, the school district constructed a system of differential cut-offs for admissions based on ethnicity. For example, in 1993-94, out of a total possible 69 points, Chinese American students were required to have at least a score of 61, Whites, Native Americans, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino students were required to have at least a score of 59, and African American and Latino students were required to have at least a score of 50 (Der, 1996). This resulted in fewer Chinese American students gaining admission to Lowell and greater representation of other groups. In effect, Caucasian, African American, and Latino students were being admitted with the same or lower scores than Chinese American students who were rejected. This caused some to feel that unqualified students were taking the places of high scoring Chinese American students, while others felt that the admissions policy served as an affirmative action boost for White students who really did not need the help (Asimov, 1995).

Possibly in an effort to counter the previous year's claims of the Ho plaintiffs, starting with the 1996-97 academic year Lowell operated under a different admissions policy than in the past. For the class of 2000, the first 80% of the applicants were admitted based on the same cut-off number. The other 20% of the class fell under the "value-added" category. A committee consisting of teachers, administrators, parents, and students used a numerical formula to select students who qualified under a series of other considerations, mostly socioeconomic: eligibility for free and reduced lunch, public benefits status, residence in public housing, homelessness, and living below national and state poverty levels (SFUSD, 1996). For example, a student could be given four points for living in poverty or two points for living in public housing (Zachary, 1997).

Furthermore, the additional criteria of coursework completed in middle school, extracurricular activities, as well as the zip code of the residence (to insure integration of the different parts of the city) could also be used in the admissions decision. Students with lower scores were admitted on the basis of high potential and were required to attend a special summer session before their freshman year as well as take a special class, "Strategies for Success," in order to help them make the transition to Lowell's academically competitive environment (Zachary, 1997).

Although racial factors were not explicitly stated as one of the "value-added" factors in the new admissions policy, some were fearful that the admissions plan had an inherent value added for race (Asimov, 1996). In response to that, the principal of Lowell, Paul Cheng, stated that racial classification was indeed one of the categories, although a student would need to possess other factors as well (P. Cheng, personal communication, August 19, 1996). The similarity of racial representation under the two policies, however, led some to question whether the new policy was merely a smoke screen for the district to continue their race-based admissions (Asimov, 1996)

Enrollment Rate Comparisons

At first glance, it is not clear who benefited or suffered under the old admissions policy. According to the plaintiffs in the Ho case, Chinese Americans students were unfairly burdened by the Consent Decree, and one example of this is the Lowell policy. The plaintiffs stated that:

> Throughout the schools of the SFUSD, students of Chinese descent are harmed by the District's race-based admission and transfer system...Chinese students

> compose the largest 'minority' group identified by the Decree and are the most likely to be affected by its race-based quotas. (Ho v. SFUSD, 1996).

Certainly no one denies that Chinese students were required to achieve a higher composite score in order to gain admission. Others, however, argue that Chinese students are already over-represented at Lowell and that it was the school district's responsibility to do everything possible to increase the representation of other groups (Walsh, 1993). And others, such as community leader and educator Henry Der, argue that the Chinese community is hurting itself in the long term by destroying the Consent Decree (1996).

With the old admissions policy, the district clearly had enrollment goals for all ethnic groups as well as a cap of 40% for Chinese American students, consistent with Consent Decree stipulations. As demonstrated in Table 2, for 1994 through 1996, the percentage of Chinese students remained at about 40% for each entering class. White students composed approximately 17-19%, Other Non-White students 13-14%, Latino students 12%, and Black students 5-6% of each class. With the new admissions policy, these numbers changed somewhat, although not drastically (P. Cheng, personal communication, November 5, 1996). For the 1996-97 school year, the percentage of Chinese students was again approximately 40%. Other Whites decreased 2.3% from 19.2% the previous year to 16.9%, Latino students rose slightly from 11.5% to 12.4%, and African Americans increased from 5.3% to 6.8%.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Further analysis provides more illuminating figures. For example, one can consider a representation parity ratio by dividing the percentage of a group at Lowell by the percentage of the group within the school district's student enrollment in order to gain

a sense of the group's representation at Lowell as compared to their representation in the general population. Using a parity ratio, the number 1.0 represents a perfect correspondence between a group's representation within the school as compared to the district. A score over 1.0 indicates that the group is over-represented with respect to their district population, and a score below 1.0 indicates that the group is under-represented. With that in mind, in 1995-96, the last year of the old admissions policy, the representation parity ratio for Chinese American students was 1.48, for white students 1.47, for Latino students .56, for African American students .30, and for Other Non-White students 1.24, as demonstrated in Table 3 below. For 1996-97 and under the new admissions policy, the representation parity ratio for Chinese American students was 1.51, for white students 1.3, for Latino students .59, for African American students .38, and for Other Non-White students 1.18. Clearly, in both years and under both admissions policies, African American and Latino students were under-represented at Lowell while white and Chinese students were over-represented, with respect to their overall district populations. Furthermore, the new admissions policy served to increase, however slightly, Chinese, African American, and Latino representation while decreasing white representation.[1]

[Insert Table 3 here]

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[1] The representation parity ratios used the percentages of these ethnic groups in the district overall. The percentages of these groups are different when only considering the high school population, although the overall trend in parity ratio values is still the same. For 1996-97, using the percentages of these ethnicities from the high school population, the ratio for Chinese was 1.29, for Other White 1.42, for Latino .76, and for African American .44. Again, Chinese and White students are over-represented while Latino and African American students are under-represented.

Another comparison to consider is application rates. The application rate, or the percentage of the applicant pool made up by a given group, is highest for Chinese Americans out of the nine ethnic categories. For the class of 1996-97, Chinese students composed 34.6%, Other White 20%, Latino 12.1%, African American 5.3%, and Other Non-White 12.4% of the application pool. Again, we can apply a parity ratio by comparing the application rate of a given group to their overall population in the school district in order to gain a sense of which groups in the district are applying to Lowell and at what rates. By dividing the application rate by the percentage of the group within the district population for 1996-97 under the new policy, we find that Chinese students apply at a ratio of 1.33, whites students 1.54, Latino students .58, African American students .29, and Other Non-White students at 1.03. Again, under the new admissions policy we find Chinese and white students over-represented in the applicant pool with regards to their general percentage of the population, and Latino and African American students under-represented. Unfortunately, data regarding the application rates of individual groups was not available for previous years and a comparison cannot be made with the two admissions policies.

These figures indicate that African American and Latino students are under-represented at Lowell with regards to their district-wide populations and that they are under-represented in the applicant pool to Lowell. At least for the 1996-97 academic year, however, African Americans and Latino students were over-represented and equitably represented, respectively, at Lowell with respect to their application rates. Furthermore, Chinese American students are over-represented at Lowell with regards to their district population, over-represented within the applicant pool, and over-represented

for 1996-97 at Lowell with regards to their applicant numbers. Finally, white students were over-represented at Lowell with regards to their district population, over-represented in the applicant pool, but under-represented at Lowell with regards to their applicant numbers. These analyses would lead us to conclude that at least in the case of Lowell, the Ho plaintiffs' allegation that Chinese students are "harmed by the District's race-based admission and transfer system" is inaccurate (Ho v. SFUSD, 1996). These numbers, however, leave several questions unanswered. Why are under-represented minorities, namely Latinos and African Americans, applying at such low numbers to Lowell? Are their low application rates the reason they are under-represented at the school, or are there other factors?

One issue to consider is the students' neighborhood location. The neighborhoods on the west side of the city tend to be wealthier than those on the non-west side. It is telling to examine the figures in terms of west and non-west because students from the non-west side matriculate at lower rates than those from the wealthier west. Furthermore, an examination of whether applicants come from public or private middle schools provides a sense of who is attempting to take advantage of the resources, such as Lowell, offered by the SFUSD.

Unlike the popular perception that African American and Latino students are unable to perform at a level necessary to gain admission to Lowell, research shows that the high achieving members of these groups are not matriculating at the school after being admitted (Der, 1996). The average enrollment or matriculation rate of all students accepted to Lowell in 1993 was 76%. The enrollment rate of high achieving (a composite score of 65-69 points out of the total 69 possible) African American students

was comparatively low, with only 25% of students from private schools, 67% from the west side of the city, and 50% from the non-west side of the city enrolling after being accepted. These numbers are far below the 76% average enrollment rate. Furthermore, high achieving Latino and white students have similarly low enrollment rates. For Latinos from private schools, the enrollment rate was 30%, and for those from the west side of the city, the enrollment rate was 43%. For white students from private schools, the enrollment rate was 36%, for those from the west side of the city, 71%, and from the non-west side of the city, 41%. Chinese students from private schools and both sides of the city, on the other hand, matriculated at rates above the 76% average.

Although the numbers of high achieving African American and Latino students are not as high as the number of Chinese students in the same point range, this finding has far-reaching implications for several reasons. If one compares the number of African American students who scored 61 points or above (the cut-off that year for Chinese students) but did not enroll to the number of African Americans who scored below 61 points but did enroll, only 13 more African Americans enrolled than would have been the case if everyone was subject to the same 61 point cut-off. If one compares the number of African Americans who did not enroll but had a 59 point score (the cut-off for whites that year) or above to the African Americans who scored below 59 points and did enroll, the number drops to three students. For Latino students, the same analysis reveals that with the 61 point cut-off, 10 more students enrolled than would have been the case if everyone was subject to the 61 point cut-off, and with the 59 point cut-off, 8 more students.

These numbers are quite small given the large debate that developed around them. Considering the low rates of application to Lowell for African Americans and Latinos, it

appears that the entire debate would have been unnecessary if application rates and matriculation rates increased. It is not that high achieving under-represented minority students do not exist, it is that they chose not to attend Lowell.

Several explanations seem likely for this phenomenon. It is possible that parents prefer that their children continue to enroll in the private sector, especially given that the enrollment rates of private school applicants are particularly low. Another possibility is that the controversy over Lowell admissions, while not a deterrent to Chinese and white applicants (and hence their high application rates), is a deterrent not only to under-represented minorities applying to Lowell, but a factor that prevents them from enrolling once accepted. In other words, perhaps the Lowell controversy has served to make minority students hesitant to enter an environment where their very presence would seem to some an indication of preferential treatment, regardless of the actual composite scores of those students.

In San Francisco Chronicle articles regarding the Lowell controversy, several Latino and African American students stated that they felt like outcasts within the high school because of their race.

> Several students said that some blacks and Latinos who may be qualified for Lowell would rather go to school with friends closer to home, forgoing a prestigious diploma for a less competitive, friendlier environment....Neeka Baily, who came to Lowell from a nearby private school of mostly African Americans, told of a teacher who had criticized her and other black students for sitting in the back of class. "He said, 'Why sit in back? Black people should achieve.' He made it seem like black people are always underachieving." (Asimov, 1996).

Guillermo Quinonez, a Mexican American graduate of Lowell, stated, "We felt alone a lot of times. If there had been more of us, there would have been more support" (Shioya, 1995). Antoinette Dempsey, an African American alumna of Lowell, recalled,

> There was the perception that because I was black, I couldn't cut it. I always felt that I had to prove myself. I felt like I was the fly in the buttermilk – and that I had to be the one to exonerate the race. (Shioya, 1995).

Clearly, minority communities are sensitive to their perceived role in the admissions debate and this could very likely be a factor in their decision to apply to or attend Lowell.

In contrast to the Ho view, some feel that Chinese representation at Lowell is too high and the district should do everything possible to increase the representation of other groups. The numbers seem to indicate, however, that rather than questioning why there are high numbers of Chinese students at Lowell, the debate would be better served by examining why there are not higher numbers of African Americans and Latinos applying to and attending Lowell. One possible strategy is for the school district to not only examine the behavior patterns of high-achieving African Americans and Latinos at the high school level, but also the efforts needed to increase the numbers of younger students who would be qualified to attend Lowell. By not waiting until students are of high school age to attempt to equalize educational access, efforts concentrated on younger students may make the Lowell controversy unnecessary.

Finally, some community members feel that while the Lowell admissions policy was unfair, the Chinese American community should realize that low-income Chinese American students would be hurt by an abandonment of the Consent Decree. Der states, "There is a correlation between the poverty status of Chinese students living on the

[poorer] east side [of San Francisco] and low academic achievement" (1994). For example, among the six predominately Chinese elementary schools on the east side, four of them ranked in the bottom half of all elementary schools in California on the CTBS test in reading for 1990-91, four of them in the bottom half for the test in language arts, and three in the bottom half for mathematics (Der, 1994). One finds different achievement levels when examining the 11 predominately Chinese elementary schools located in the wealthier parts of the city. Of these 11 schools, in 1990-91 nine of them ranked within the top 20 schools in reading, ten of them within the top 20 schools for language arts, and ten of them for mathematics. Furthermore, for Lowell's 1993 applicant pool, less than one fourth of the Chinese applicants who applied had gone to schools on the east side of the city. Three quarters of Chinese applicants attended a private middle school or a middle school on the west side of the city. This held true for other groups as well, as two thirds of African American and Latino applicants attended a private or west side middle school. Therefore, Der concluded that "relative to other racial groups, race-based enrollment guidelines have not disproportionately affected Chinese students, in terms of school choice, access to alternative schools or association with high-achieving students. On the other hand, economic status and neighborhood of residence determine, to a large extent, which students within a specific racial minority group will achieve access to school choice and academic excellence (Der, 1994). Interestingly, and as mentioned earlier, Chinese American students enroll at Lowell at above average rates while African American and Latino students enroll at below average rates, regardless of the side of the city from which they originate.

The Outcome of Ho v. SFUSD

In February 1999, the school district reached an agreement with the Ho plaintiffs. The SFUSD agreed to no longer use race in student assignments, which allowed the district to avoid a trial that could have possibly led to the loss of its entire desegregation plan and its supplemental funding from the state of $37.6 million (Asimov, 1999). The judge allowed the district to submit a proposal for a new enrollment plan. In September, the district submitted a plan that used race, family income, reading and math scores, and language proficiency to comprise a "diversity index." In December of 1999, the court rejected the proposal, stating that the district failed to show that the use of race as one of four considered factors was constitutional (Wagner, 1999).

As a result, the San Francisco school board decided not to use the diversity index without the racial component and instead decided to continue with the plan that was used for the 1999-00 academic year (Seligman, 2000). The plan currently in place gives preferences to students who reside near the school, who have siblings attending the school, who need special programs, who live in certain zip codes in the city, or who live in public housing (SFUSD website, 3-7-00). The district's website states, "The District has decided to use the student assignment plan that was in effect for the 1999-2000 school year, while continuing to study its effects on the diversity of the District. The District will also continue to study the potential use of a Diversity Index as part of the student assignment process" (3-7-00). The impact of the plan can already be felt in schools across the district, including Lowell. For ninth graders who were admitted to Lowell for the fall of 2000, 410 are Chinese American, 237 are White, 84 are Non-White, 40 are Latino, and 13 are African American. This represents an increase of Chinese

American and White students and a decrease of Other Non-White, African American, and Latino students (Guthrie, 2000). See Table 1 for percentages.

The exclusion of Asian and Latino concerns in the desegregation process in the SFUSD led to the Ho v. SFUSD case and ultimately to the end racial assignments within the district. Although the Chinese American plaintiffs won their case, stakeholders continue to be concerned. A group of African American, Latino, and Filipino students filed an amicus brief with the court, stating that only Chinese American and district concerns were addressed in the settlement. Furthermore, the brief called on the district to eliminate the use of test scores in Lowell admissions, arguing that the school will remain segregated if test scores continue to be the main admissions criterion. They also asked the court to provide "extensive transportation" and other outreach to students who live on the east side of the city, and to implement changes in the teaching methods at Lowell, which they claim stigmatize minority students (Wagner, 12-15-99).

Although the old Lowell admissions policy clearly made it more difficult for Chinese Americans than other races to enter Lowell, the evidence indicates that Chinese students were not prevented from maximizing their use of the educational system. In fact, Chinese students are over-represented in applying to and attending Lowell while African American and Latino students are under-represented. This does not necessarily stem, however, from a lack of qualified minorities. African American and Latino students in the highest possible point bracket matriculate to Lowell at well below the average rate, possibly because the admissions policy may have resulted in a hostile environment which led people to assume that all minority students were admitted under preferential criteria. The American public education system has not yet found an

effective systemic way to address the needs of low-income and low-achieving students. The experience of the San Francisco Unified School District indicate that regardless of whether desegregation continues to be a strategy for equalizing opportunities, districts may need to include all major stakeholders in the decision making process.

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Asimov, N. (1996, August 28). Lowell freshmen reflect new entry rules but Chinese Americans and Black leaders still unhappy. San Francisco Chronicle, p. A1.

Asimov, N. (1999, February 17). Ethnic quotas in S.F. public schools to end, trial averted—pact revealed today. San Francisco Chronicle, p. A1.

San Francisco NAACP, et. al., v. San Francisco Unified School District, et. al., No. C78-1445 WHO, Consent Decree (N.D. Cal. 1983).

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Table 1: Racial Composition of SFUSD Student Body, 1971 - 1999

	African American	Other White	Latino	Chinese American	Other Non-White
1971-72	30.1%	29.6%	14%	15%	2.5%
1983-84	23.2%	17%	17.3%	19.2%	11.8%
1999-2000	15.6%	11.7%	21.5%	29.3%	12.3%

Table 2: Ethnic Representation at Lowell High School

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1999-00
Chinese	40.6%	39.1%	39.3%	47.1%
Other White	16.6%	19.2%	16.9%	17.9%
Spanish Surname	12.2%	11.5%	12.4%	9.2%
Black	5.4%	5.3%	6.8%	4.1%
Other Non-White	12.6%	14.6%	14.1%	12.9%
Filipino	6.3%	6.1%	5.6%	4.6%
Korean	4.4%	2.5%	2.4%	2.4%
Japanese	2.0%	1.3%	1.3%	1.5%
American Indian	0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%
TOTALS	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 3: Parity Ratios

	Admission Rates: # admit/#apply	Application Rates: (% of app pool)	Representation P.R.: % in school/ % in SFUSD	Application P.R.: app rate/ % in SFUSD	Rep P.R./App P.R.: % in school/ app rate
Chinese	39.7%	34.6%	1.51	1.33	1.14
Other White	29.6%	20.0%	1.3	1.54	0.85
Spanish Surname	35.9%	12.1%	0.59	0.58	1.02
Black	45.1%	5.3%	0.38	0.29	1.28
Other Non-White	39.7%	12.4%	1.18	1.03	1.14
Filipino	21.7%	9.1%	0.8	1.3	0.62
Korean	32.7%	2.5%	2.4	2.5	0.96
Japanese	20.9%	2.2%	1.3	2.2	0.59
American Indian	27.3%	0.6%	0.4	0.6	0.67